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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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STAFF MEMORANDUM No. 71-55

SUBJECT: Political trends in the Soviet Satellites

Introduction

1. The expulsion of the Yugoslav party from the Cominform in 1948 first made clear that a Satellite party could be infected with national sentiment. The basic causes for the breach were Soviet refusal to support Belgrade's ambitious schemes of industrialization, Soviet veto of the proposed federation of Bulgaria with Yugoslavia, and the Soviet effort to establish covert supervision over the Yugoslav party. In other words, the controlling elements among the Yugoslav Communists, when confronted with a direct conflict between Yugoslav national interests and the solidarity of international Communism under Moscow's control, opted for national interest.

2. There are many respects in which the Yugoslav situation was unique. Among all the east European parties, only the Yugoslav and the Albanian had fought their way into power through the development of partisan forces; and the Albanian party was, in some respects, a creation of the Yugoslav. There has accumulated since 1948 certain evidence that "nationalist" or potentially "nationalist" factions exist in many, if not all, of the Satellite parties. The following paragraphs will discuss the evidence for the existence of these nationalist factions in the Satellite parties. Thereafter the paper will present for consideration the ways in which these nationalist factions tend to conflict with opposing Moscovite factions, and the possible significance of the nationalist factions for future Soviet policy.

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Historical background of the nationalist faction

3. Tito's expulsion from the Cominform was followed by a series of purges in each of the Satellite parties. Between 1948 and 1951 there were purges of "Titoists" throughout the Satellites: Xoxe in Albania, Rajk in Hungary, Kostov in Bulgaria, Clementis in Czechoslovakia, and Gomulka in Poland. In actual fact, there was one case of Titoism before Tito. This was the case of Patrascanu, Minister of Justice in the Groza government, and the most prominent Communist of ethnically Romanian origin at the time of the Soviet occupation of Romania. Patrascanu disappeared from public view in 1946, two years before the Cominform resolution expelling Tito. Publicly he was accused of doctrinal deviation, but his real crime appears to have been his open defiance of Soviet authority in the matter of the relations between the Hungarian minority and the Romanian majority in Transylvania.

4. In September, 1948, Vladislav Gomulka was expelled from the Polish politburo. Of peasant stock, Gomulka's principal assignment had been that of Minister for the Recovered Territories, a role which tended to identify him with the survival of the Poles as a nation. Gomulka had sought to block the very formation of the Cominform, apparently fearing the effects of closer Soviet supervision. It is said that one reason for holding the founding meeting in Warsaw was to force Gomulka publicly to welcome the new organization. Gomulka is also reported to have been the only representative at the Cominform meeting of June, 1948, who opposed the expulsion of Tito. The care with which the Gomulka case was handled, the fact that he was never brought to trial, and his recent release from prison, suggest that he may have a sizeable following in the Polish party.

5. The Albanian case is complicated by the fact that the Albanian party was originally a Satellite of the Yugoslav. Probably the Kremlin intended in the beginning to have this miniature Moslem principality managed directly from Belgrade. When the break between Tito and Stalin came, the Albanian Communists were given a choice of masters. After a prolonged struggle, Xoxe and his followers were liquidated (June, 1949), and the Albanian party sided with Moscow. From an Albanian national point of view, this was a reasonable decision. Albania irredenta, the province of Kossovo-Metchija, was a part of Yugoslavia and since Belgrade probably aimed at the incorporation of the whole of Albania, it seemed clear that Yugoslavia constituted a greater threat to Albanian national interests than did the more distant Soviet Union. Thus the Albanians were not presented, as the Yugoslavs had been, with a choice between their national interests and their ideological leanings. Rather the contrary: loyalty to Moscow would save Albania from absorption by the Southern Slavs.

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6. Rajk, the Hungarian "Tito", apparently became the center of a bitter internal party struggle involving the issue of anti-Semitism. In a region where anti-Semitism is endemic, it was impossible for the Hungarian Communist party to grow from the few thousand members of 1945 to the 800,000 of 1949 without incorporating large numbers of persons with anti-Semitic leanings, particularly at the lower level of the party. The party leadership being predominantly Jewish, anti-Semitism soon came to serve as a medium for the expression of national sentiment. As the only non-Jewish member of the politburo, Rajk became, perhaps unwillingly, a threat to the power of Mattyas Rakosi, secretary general of the Hungarian Communist party and the most prominent of all Moscovites. Thus Rajk's trial as a "Titoist" in September, 1949.

7. The Bulgarian "Tito" was Traicho Kostov, party chief in command in Bulgaria proper during World War II. Kostov had bitterly opposed the federation of his country with Yugoslavia on the grounds that Bulgaria would ultimately be "swallowed up" by her larger partner. Apparently he headed up a faction within the Bulgarian party with similar sentiments; at any rate he was hung as a deviationist in December, 1949.

8. Vladimir Clementis, the Czechoslovak Communist liquidated on charges of Titoism had many black spots on his record, from the Kremlin point of view. He had, for example, refused to follow the Moscow line in the period of the Nazi-Soviet pact. He had also taken the lead in urging the expulsion into Hungary of the Magyar minority of Slovakia, an expulsion which Moscow forbade. When Clementis at last appeared in the dock (1952) he was in the company of the men who probably had engineered his fall from power many months before, Rudolph Slansky and Bedrich Geminder. Although Slansky, Geminder, and Clementis were tarred with the same nationalist brush during the trial, the anti-Semitic overtones of the proceedings suggested that now it was the turn of the Moscovites to be purged.

9. The visit of Krushchev and Bulganin to Belgrade in 1955 marked a turning point in the history of Soviet-Satellite relations. The re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Moscow and Belgrade led necessarily to the reestablishment of such relations between Belgrade and the Satellite capitals. Whether renewal of party contacts between Moscow and Belgrade would also be followed by the reestablishment of party relations between Belgrade and the Satellites is still not clear. Moscow may prefer to deal with the Belgrade leaders in isolation from the context of Satellite interparty relations. The Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement would in itself tend to strengthen the nationalist factions in the Satellite parties.

Ethnic and social derivation of the nationalists

10. It is possible to perceive a rough similarity among the nationalist factions in the Satellite parties. Their leaders tend to be members of the ethnic majority. Rajk was ethnically Hungarian, Gomulka ethnically Polish, Patrascanu ethnically Rumanian, Clementis ethnically Slovak, and so on.

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They are, as a matter of social origin, less often intellectuals and more often landless peasants or industrial workers or skilled craftsmen. Nationalist leaders tend to have been born in frontier provinces, where national tensions run high. For the most part they spent the war years at home, living the risky life of the underground leader; they did not, as a rule, return from Moscow in the Soviet baggage train.

11. The significance of these characteristics is made clearer by comparison with those of the Moscovites, who tend to be derived from the ethnic minorities. Moscovites are, to take the Romanian politburo, Jewish like Pauker, Hungarian like Luka, German like Radiceanu, Ukrainian like Bodnarus. Gheorghiu-Dej owes his importance to the fact that he was almost the only Romanian Communist who was both Romanian and a worker. Moscovites tend in fact to come from middle class families; the economic factor played little role in their conversion to Communism. Many of them spent the war years in the comparative safety of Moscow.

Policy tendencies of the nationalists

12. Just as it is possible to discern a rough sociological similarity among nationalist factions, so it also seems to be true that these factions have a tendency to favor roughly similar policies. The nationalist tends to be more tolerant of divergent ideas and manifests a greater willingness to compromise. He tends to place less reliance on the use of terror and to compromise with the peasant opposition to collectivization. The nationalist is inclined to place less emphasis on the role of the party and greater reliance on the bureaucracy and the class of industrial managers. Under nationalist aegis the party may be hidden behind a popular front and government organs may receive a certain autonomy. Indeed, nationalists tend to take early root in government -- as distinguished from party -- offices. They tend to develop normal bureaucratic careers. Moscovites, on the other hand, seem to congregate in the secret police and the security apparatus. Members of minority groups which have suffered frequent persecution, they feel more secure nearer the very center of power.

Strength of nationalist factions

13. What circumstances help determine the relative strength of the nationalist tendency in a given Satellite? To begin with, there is the extent of popular support enjoyed by the local Communist party. The less the popular support, the more dependent the Satellite party concerned on Moscow, and the higher the proportion of Moscovites. Conversely, the greater the local support, the smaller the proportion of Moscovites but the greater the danger of independent action by the local party. Titoism in Yugoslavia was possible, among other reasons, because Tito had solidly behind him a Partisan army, tested in battle. It would be natural for Communist ideology to have its greatest following among peoples who have traditionally looked

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to Russia for help and who, having no common frontier with Russia, have had no territorial quarrel with her. Thus popular support for Communism would logically be greatest among the Czechs, the Yugoslavs, and the Bulgars. If the question is asked why the Czechs and the Bulgars have not attempted to follow the Yugoslav example, the answer is in part that the Czechs have a Sudetenland and the Bulgars territorial aspirations blocked by Russia's enemies. Neither the Czech nor the Bulgarian Communists, furthermore, developed a significant partisan army.

14. A second factor which would favor the nationalists over the Moscovites would be greater availability of capital. The Bolshevik system is designed for the rapid industrialization of backward countries through forced saving. Collectivization is, among other things, a device by which the peasantry is forced to feed the cities without an adequate return for their labor. What the peasantry would normally have been paid becomes available for investment. Forcing an already poor population to save huge amounts is a nasty business, involving secret police, political terror, and labor camps. The higher the goals set in the industrialization process, the greater the need for terror, and the greater the terror required, the greater the demand for the Moscovite to keep the system going. Therefore if capital should become available from some source other than forced saving, or if the program of rapid industrialization should be watered down, the extremist would have less of a role to play.

15. A third factor affecting the position of the nationalists would be a relaxation of international tension. A principal reason for the forced industrialization of a backward country is military: the protection of the sovereignty of the state. A diminution in the chances of war, a general reduction in armament, or in the pace at which arms are accumulated, would make possible, though not inevitable, a diminution in the rate of forced industrialization.

Moscow and the nationalists

16. It is not inconceivable that a limited policy of favoring the nationalist at the expense of Moscovite factions in the Satellites could have certain advantages for Moscow. Certain features of the nationalist program such as the postponement of collectivization, the slowing down of industrialization, and an apparent return to the rule of law would take some of the curse off the Satellite regimes for Western public opinion. It would be easier, for example, to persuade emigres to return to a country in which nationalist elements seemed paramount, in which there was less in the way of political terror and more in the way of consumers' goods. Some years of such a regime might tend to legitimize the Satellite regimes in the eyes of the West, and to contribute generally to the relaxation of tension. A secondary advantage is that even a partial implementation of the nationalist program might help to reduce the widespread popular dissidence against which the Satellite regimes

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have had to struggle. Somewhat higher living standards might convince sections of the population that collaboration with the government was not impossible. The Nagy government in Hungary (1953-53) might have served as an experimental prototype of a nationalist regime had it continued in office over a longer period.

17. Favoring the nationalists and their policies would also involve certain risks for Moscow. The granting of even apparent concessions to Satellite public opinion might be taken by the populace at large as a portent of weakness and raise public expectation far beyond what Moscow was prepared to give. There would also be the risk of demoralizing the Moscovites. Some such old Bolshevik as Rakosi might have to be sacrificed as a symbol, and as a concession to the Yugoslavs. While the ultimate controls in each Satellite regime would still rest with Moscovite elements, over the years these elements would be affected by a process of attrition while within the regime there would emerge new groups who had a vested interest in the continuation of the nationalist policies. The danger of deviation among the nationalists would also be increased. Finally, there is the matter of Yugoslav ambitions. If the USSR adopted a policy favoring the nationalist factions, this would clearly be a victory for the Yugoslav leader and his party. The prestige of Tito among East European Communists would increase sharply. The dictator in Belgrade probably harbors ambitions of becoming the leader of a Balkan Communist bloc. The existence of such a bloc would be difficult to reconcile with Soviet interests in the area.

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